



FACT SHEET

Influenza A (H5N1) Outbreak in Vietnam

Recent Influenza A (H5N1) Cases

Since the end of October 2003, 14 persons (13 children and 1 adult) in Vietnam have been admitted from surrounding provinces to hospitals in Hanoi for severe respiratory illness. Among the 14 patients, three (2 children and 1 adult) have had avian influenza A (H5N1) virus infections confirmed by testing conducted at the National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology in Hanoi and in Hong Kong. Twelve of the patients, including 11 children and the mother of one of the deceased children, have died.

Influenza A (H5N1) viruses normally circulate among wild birds but can infect poultry and rarely have infected people in the past. In 1997, 18 persons in Hong Kong were hospitalized because of influenza A (H5N1) infections and six of them died. In 2003, two residents of Hong Kong who traveled to China developed influenza A (H5N1) virus infections and one of them died. In Vietnam, large outbreaks of influenza A (H5N1) have been reported among poultry in the southern and northern regions of the country. WHO has reported that the H5N1 strain implicated in the outbreak has now been partially sequenced. All genes are of avian origin, indicating that the virus that caused death in the three confirmed cases had not yet acquired human genes. The acquisition of human genes increases the likelihood that a virus of avian origin can be readily transmitted from one human to another.

Staff from CDC will travel to Vietnam to work with WHO and Vietnam's human and animal health authorities to evaluate the situation, including patterns of transmission of the influenza A (H5N1) viruses.

During December 2003, an outbreak of avian influenza A (H5N1) was reported among poultry in South Korea. Earlier this week, Japan reported the deaths of 6,000 chickens on a single farm in the western part of Honshu due to influenza A (H5N1) virus infection. No human cases of infection with the avian influenza virus have been reported in either of these outbreaks.

Enhanced U.S. Influenza Surveillance

At this time, CDC recommends enhanced surveillance efforts by state and local health departments, hospitals, and clinicians to identify patients who have been hospitalized with unexplained pneumonia, ARDS, or severe respiratory illness AND who have traveled to Vietnam, South Korea, and Japan within 10 days from onset of symptoms.

CDC will make additional recommendations on enhanced surveillance if influenza A (H5N1) activity continues to evolve.

CDC's Response to 2003-04 Avian Influenza Outbreak

Staff from CDC will travel to Vietnam to work with WHO and Vietnam's human and animal health authorities to evaluate the situation, including patterns of transmission of the influenza A (H5N1) viruses.

More Information About Influenza

For further details about the reported cases of influenza A (H5N1) in Vietnam, see the WHO Web site www.who.int/en/. Additional information about influenza is available on the CDC Web site at www.cdc.gov.